



SOLIDARITY

**IS NOT A
CRIME**



**SEX WORKER
FREEDOM FESTIVAL
KOLKATA, INDIA 2012**



The Sex Worker Freedom Festival was made possible through the support of the following funders and donors;



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands



The following organisations supported scholarships;



SOLIDARITY

IS NOT A CRIME

REFLECTING ON THE
SEX WORKER
FREEDOM FESTIVAL

The alternative
IAC2012 event
for sex workers
and allies

Kolkata, India
21-26 July 2012



Global Network of Sex Work Projects

Promoting Health and Human Rights

The Matrix, 62 Newhaven Road
Edinburgh, Scotland, UK, EH6 5QB
+44 131 553 2555
secretariat@nswp.org

www.nswp.org

Follow NSWP:



NSWP is a private not-for-profit limited company.
Company No. SC349355



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/)

Contributors: Zoe Scrogings, Andrew Hunter,
Dale Kongmont, Mitch Cosgrove, Cath Sluggett,
Neil McCulloch, Ruth Morgan Thomas,
Sex Worker Open University

Front cover photos: top – Marc De Clercq;
bottom left and bottom right – Dale Kongmont

Back cover photos: top – Marc De Clercq;
bottom left – Sex Worker Open University

Contents

Introduction	1
About This Publication	3
About NSWP	5
Sex Workers of the World Unite	7
Why a Sex Worker Freedom Festival?	13
Why Kolkata, India?	17
Programme Highlights	19
The Seven Freedoms	37
Media Coverage and Info-Activism	51
The Legacy – Where Are We Now?	65



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT

Introduction

THE SEX WORKER FREEDOM FESTIVAL

...(SWFF) was an alternative International AIDS Conference 2012 event for sex workers and allies held in Kolkata, India from 21 to 26 July 2012. SWFF was an official International AIDS Conference 2012 Hub. Supported by Open Society Foundation – Sexual Health and Rights Program, American Jewish World Service (AJWS), UNAIDS, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, UNFPA, HIVOS, AIDS Fonds and AIDS 2012 conference secretariat.

US government travel restrictions for sex workers meant that many sex workers were not able, or not willing to go to the IAC in Washington this year. The Sex Worker Freedom Festival was an alternative event for sex workers and our allies to protest our exclusion and ensure the voices of those excluded were heard in Washington.



PHOTO: SEX WORKER OPEN UNIVERSITY



Andrew Hunter, NSW President said,

“with the US now leading the fight for Lesbian, Gay and Transgender equality we are extremely disappointed that they refuse to revise their restrictions on sex workers and refuse to recognise that we are human beings with basic rights.”

Despite working with a 9.5 hour time difference between Kolkata and Washington there was still video linking with conference sessions and Global Village activities in Washington.

Over 667 participants, including 130 international sex workers from 43 countries, and more than 400 Indian sex workers; along with representatives from networks of people living with HIV, people using drugs, men who have sex with men and transgender people; UNAIDS and Cosponsors; national governments; international non-governmental organisations; academics; and service providers, arrived for the first ever Global Hub of the International AIDS Conference, hosted and co-hosted by Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee (DMSC), Global Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWP), and All India Network of Sex Workers (AINSW) respectively.



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT



PHOTO: MARC DE CLERCQ

About This Publication

This publication is a snapshot of curated content outlining a significant and historic moment in the Sex Worker Rights Movement. **‘SOLIDARITY IS NOT A CRIME’** seeks to document some of the momentous achievements that took place as part of the Sex Worker Freedom Festival, Kolkata, India 2012, and the impacts from this remarkable once in a lifetime gathering.

This publication can be viewed on almost any device from iPhones and Androids, to iPads, Tablets and E-Readers. Content can be shared via social networks, or e-mailed direct, the document can also be saved as a PDF file and therefore printed. We encourage you to click on the links and share this information widely. We've tried to include as much as possible in the pages of 'Solidarity Is Not A Crime' however we couldn't possibly include every single tweet, facebook status update, photo, youtube clip, vimeo clip and blog so we encourage you to use this publication as a starting point. Hashtags to follow are #SWFF #aids2012

Sex Workers Are Fabulous! VIVA LA REVOLUTION!

Follow the conversation on Twitter:



About NSWP



THE GLOBAL NETWORK OF SEX WORK PROJECTS

The Global Network of Sex Work Projects exists to uphold the voice of sex workers globally and connect regional networks advocating for the rights of female, male and transgender sex workers. It advocates for rights-based health and social services, freedom from abuse and discrimination, and self determination for sex workers.



NSWP CORE VALUES ARE:

- Acceptance of sex work as work
- Opposition to all forms of criminalisation and other legal oppression of sex work (including sex workers, clients, third parties*, families, partners and friends)
- Supporting self-organisation and self-determination of sex workers

* The term 'third parties' includes managers, brothel keepers, receptionists, maids, drivers, landlords, hotels who rent rooms to sex workers and anyone else who is seen as facilitating sex work.



THE MOBILISATION OF A MOVEMENT

Sex Workers of the World Unite

GLOBAL SEX WORKERS ON THE MARCH

Imagine a sea of red umbrellas and artful banners flooding the busy streets of Kolkata, India, to a soundtrack of over a thousand sex workers from around the world chanting "Sex Worker Rights Are Human Rights" literally stopping Kolkata's notorious peak hour traffic. In bold solidarity, sex workers marched to demand our basic human rights and to send a clear, laser sharp message to Washington that sex workers are not the problem but essential in the solution to end AIDS...



PHOTO: SEX WORKER OPEN UNIVERSITY



AIDS 2012 Conference Overview

...Meanwhile in Washington 20,000 people gathered in hope to 'Turn The Tide' at the 19th International AIDS Conference. The likes of former US President Bill Clinton, US Secretary Of State Hillary Clinton, Former US First Lady Laura Bush, World Bank President Jim Yong Kim, Philanthropist Bill Gates and numerous others are among individuals committed to ending the pandemic. It is a 'chance to assess where we are, evaluate recent scientific developments and lessons learnt, and collectively chart a course forward.' Sex Workers in Washington were ready to 'Rock The Boat' in solidarity with their colleagues who could not travel to Washington...

Back to the streets in Kolkata our message was fierce,

"US GOVERNMENT SHAME ON YOU!"

is chanted by sex workers and allies, as media crews from around the globe hustle to get the best vantage point.



PHOTO: PJ STARR



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT

Bollywood starlet, sex worker and transgender human rights activist Laxmi is being interviewed by the BBC followed by local media.

“WHY ARE WE HERE IN KOLKATA AND NOT IN WASHINGTON?”

Because it is the US Government’s travel restrictions that prevent sex workers from entering the country. It does not make sense for the largest HIV/AIDS Conference in the world to exclude sex workers, who are most vulnerable, and are often unjustly blamed for the spread of HIV and AIDS. We are here in solidarity and demand dignity.

US GOVERNMENT SHAME ON YOU!”

she raises her fist in the air and the chanting continues.

Ruth Morgan Thomas, NSWP Global Coordinator, explains to a reporter over the noise,

“This is a direct message to Washington, you cannot turn the tide without us, we are part of the solution and we have the right to be with you.”



The voice from Kolkata is loud and clear, sex workers are not the problem we are part of the AIDS solution. The problem is, why aren’t the organisers of the AIDS Conference listening?

Follow the Conversation on Twitter:





**NO DRUG
USERS
NO SEX
WORKER
NO INTERNATIONAL
AID
CONFERENCE**

PHOTO: PJ STARR

Why a Sex Worker Freedom Festival?

ENTRY: DENIED

A respected sex worker rights activist was denied entry to the United States of America in June 2010. She was stopped en-route to a meeting of the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) of the Global Commission on HIV and the Law at the invitation of UNDP.

US government travel restrictions highlighted a real threat to female, male and transgender sex workers meaningful participation in the 2012 IAC – International AIDS Conference held in Washington DC.

While sex worker rights advocates applaud the lifting of US travel restrictions in relation to positive HIV status, the change has not been sufficient to protect the human rights of sex workers of all genders including those who are living with HIV. However the systematic exclusion of key affected groups such as sex workers and drug users, from attending a conference dedicated to discussing HIV was an important reason to protest.

**THE US GOVERNMENT HAS
SHOWN NO POLITICAL WILL
TO ADDRESS THIS ISSUE.**



“sex workers are seen as if they are from another planet, they are part of the community, we must be inclusive and end discrimination”

Annah Pickering,
New Zealand
Prostitutes
Collective

Current US legislation (Immigration Nationality Act sections 212 and 217) restricts entry on the grounds of Crime Involving Moral Turpitude.

Entry is also denied on the grounds of moral turpitude for any person believed to have been a sex worker in the previous 10 years, regardless of criminal record. This also applies to people from countries in which sex work is legal and recognised as an occupation.

It was clearly unacceptable that the participation of sex workers in an International AIDS Conference be limited by such regressive laws. Unreasonable questioning, and humiliating treatment from immigration officials is also unacceptable and should not be experienced by sex workers and our allies when applying for a visa waiver and visas.

Stigma and discrimination disadvantage sex workers on multiple levels, in particularly in regards to immigration legislation, which inequitably restrict the movement of sex workers. Discriminatory laws and enforcement of regulations must be addressed to ensure that sex workers are treated with respect and dignity.

Given the lack of safe options for sex workers, particularly from the global south, to attend the IAC 2012 in Washington, an alternative conference Hub called the Sex Worker Freedom Festival was created.



The Sex Worker Freedom Festival (SWFF) co-hosted and organised by Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee (DMSC), Global Network of Sex Work Projects (NWSP) and All India Network of Sex Workers (AINSW) was an alternative International AIDS Conference 2012 event for sex workers and allies held in Kolkata, India from 21 to 26 July 2012.

The Sex Worker Freedom Festival was a historic event for sex workers and our allies to protest our exclusion and ensure the voices of those excluded were heard in Washington. Over 667 participants, including representatives of Sex Workers Collectives from across the globe, other allies and international NGOs, arrived for the first-ever Global Hub of the International AIDS Conference.



Prasada Rao reading a message from Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of UNAIDS

"I am inspired by the Freedom Festival. It is a wonderful example of people who face stigma and discrimination speaking out and taking control of their own destinies... a major obstacle to reducing HIV is the fact that sex workers and people who use drugs are systematically discriminated against and criminalized...and there is no evidence to suggest that such laws reduce demand for sex or the number of sex workers"

Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of UNAIDS.



Why Kolkata, India?

Democracy Now! Interview with Meena Seshu, General Secretary at SANGRAM, and Anna Pickering, New Zealand Prostitutes Collective



DURBAR, a Bengali word that means unbeatable or unstoppable, signifies the solidarity among the estimated 65,000 female, male and transgender sex workers in West Bengal.

The Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee (DMSC) has a long track record of identifying and challenging the underlying socio-structural factors that perpetuate stigma and social exclusion of sex workers. Of note is the STD and HIV Intervention initiative the 'Sonagachi Project' which in 2012 celebrated its 20th year. With strong project management and the combination of targeted information campaigns and efforts to improve the working conditions and safety of sex workers, it has been a model for the Indian Government's national HIV strategy.

Kolkata's sex workers are leading the rest of the world with lower rates of HIV, making Kolkata, India an ideal location to host the Sex Worker Freedom Festival.

THE SONAGACHI PROJECT CAN BE SUMMED UP BY THE THREE R'S:

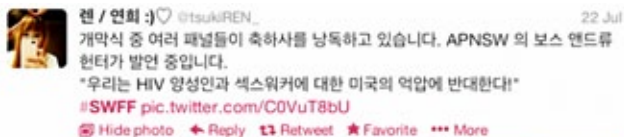
- Respect and dignity to sex work and towards sex workers
- Reliance on the knowledge and wisdom of the community of sex workers.
- Recognition of sex work as an occupation and preserve and protect their occupational and human rights.

www.durbar.org

NDTV – Denied U.S Entry Sex Workers Hold Rally In Kolkata



Follow the conversion on Twitter:



Programme Highlights

To enable a global platform to meaningfully participate in the fight to end AIDS, in the spirit of freedom, sex workers from around the globe demanded sex workers rights to seven freedoms that we all take for granted:

- **FREEDOM** to associate and unionise
- **FREEDOM** to be protected by the law
- **FREEDOM** from abuse and violence
- **FREEDOM** from stigma and discrimination
- **FREEDOM** to access quality health services
- **FREEDOM** of movement and to migrate
- **FREEDOM** to work and choose occupation



SWFF Opening Ceremony

Sex workers already living under extreme levels of structural violence, are also those most directly impacted by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Being excluded from the AIDS Conference in Washington, did not defeat sex workers, who saw this exclusion as an opportunity to stage their own event. The Sex Worker Freedom Festival gave sex workers a chance to not only have open dialogue, but to address sex work and HIV, from a human rights approach rather than from epidemiological or public health-based frameworks, that dominate dialogues at the International AIDS Conferences.

The Sex Worker Freedom Festival was a rare, once in a lifetime opportunity for sex workers to share knowledge and discuss concerns, on their own terms. The conference included Keynote speeches and Plenary Sessions, panels, presentations, cultural events and workshops, with a live satellite link to Washington that enabled us to link in solidarity with colleagues in Washington.

“Our allies must remain our allies. Our programs must be designed by sex workers”

Tracey Tulley,
APNSW



PHOTO: APNSW



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT

Critical discussions focused on the damaging impacts and injustices of harmful international policy including the clause within the United State's PEPFAR Program (President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief) that can lead to the withholding of vital funding from sex worker-led organisations who do not sign the PEPFAR anti-prostitution pledge. In addition to this sex workers shared their experiences around harmful anti-trafficking campaigns, raid and rescue tactics pushed by anti-sex work feminists, which often caused more harm than actual traffickers as described by Aziza Ahmed and Meena Seshu in the Anti-Trafficking Review and recommendations from Empower Foundation.

Follow the conversation on Twitter:



**International AIDS Conference 2012,
Plenary: Dynamics of the Epidemic in
Context, Cheryl Overs**



PHOTO: © IAS/STEVE SHAPIRO



Sex workers called for the international community to recognise sex work as a valid and acceptable profession and demanded that all aspects of sex work be decriminalised, including the rejection of the **Swedish Model** that criminalises clients. Sex worker demands were backed by the UN's Secretary General's Special Envoy on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific, **Prasada Rao**, also calling for decriminalisation. He argued that criminalisation is directly linked to high HIV rates.



PHOTO: MARC DE CLERCO



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT

HIV positive sex workers demanded the right to affordable life saving medications, with serious concerns raised about the United States attempting to restrict the production of affordable generic anti-retroviral (ARV) drugs being manufactured in India. This issue highlighted the lack of available and affordable ARV treatment globally, particularly for sex workers across the world who experience further inequitable access to treatment due to widespread criminalisation and stigmatisation.

Male and transgender sex workers highlighted the fact they are often made invisible or left out of dialogues around sex work, thus leaving them further marginalised. The Sex Worker Freedom Festival ensured the voices of male and transgender sex workers were represented across all aspects of the programme. The high prevalence of homophobic violence towards male and transgender sex workers globally was brought to light. For the first time this global discussion also included African sex workers.

Specific panels and sessions for drug users reflected upon the multiple ways in which different criminalisation, stigma and discrimination impact and affect people who use drugs. Sessions drew parallels between the legal impediments, stigma, discrimination, police hostility and abuse faced by drug users, sex workers, people living with HIV and the LGBT community. All of which result in a lack of appropriate healthcare and harm reduction services, placing people at a greater risk of contracting HIV and other blood-borne viruses. These sessions stressed the importance of drug users being in control of peer-based organising, to challenge stigma and discrimination and foster greater solidarity and empowerment.



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT

As an outcome of the many workshops, sessions and panels specifically for HIV positive sex workers, two new platforms were created and launched, including NSWP+ (NSWP's platform for positive sex workers) and APNSW+ (Asia Pacific Network of Positive Sex Workers). The Sex Worker Freedom Festival was a catalyst for the mobilisation of sex workers living with HIV and others committed to treatment access to advocate for equitable access to healthcare, including optimum treatment standards and full care and support, including access to diagnostics. Members of the founding groups of NSWP+ and APNSW+ called for equal rights for their voice to be included in policy and programme discussions around HIV with demands including;



- HIV+ sex workers demand better and affordable HIV drugs
- As positive people, we demand the right to work as sex workers
- We demand the right to work in all sectors, including any sector of the sex industry
- We demand that the drug companies in the West stop trying to kill us through their attacks on developing countries' rights to manufacture, export and import generic ARVs
- As HIV+ sex workers, we face multiple layers of stigma and discrimination. Despite 25 years of treatment activism, sex workers' voices are still excluded from this movement
- We demand not to be last in line for treatment or refused treatment because we are sex workers
- Treatment must be matched to the patient and not the patient matched to available drugs
- We demand more information about living positively and information on how to join in the campaign against Free Trade Agreements
- **AS HIV+ SEX WORKERS, WE DEMAND THE RIGHT TO LOOK FABULOUS!!!**



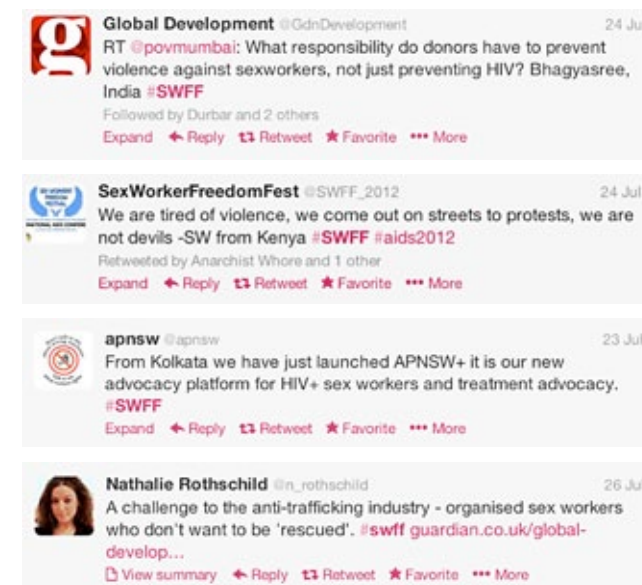
PHOTO: MARC DE CLEROQ

"We decided that we needed a special platform to fight for the rights of HIV positive sex workers. Bringing sex workers' issues, energy, and glamour of the sex workers movement to the treatment activist movement!"

NSWP+



Follow the conversation on Twitter:



To read about the plenary sessions and panels from SWFF in more detail [CLICK HERE](#) to download the Sex Work Digest Issue 1 published by NSWP.

To download The Sex Worker Freedom Festival Program [CLICK HERE](#)



Cultural Programme Highlights

RED CARPET AWARDS NIGHT

- **SENSIBLE SHOE AWARD:**
Winner by popular vote:
Melissa Farley
- **BEST SUPPORTER:**
Dr Swarup Sarkar
- **GLOBAL ACTIVIST
LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT
AWARD:** Cheryl Overs
- **YOUTH ACTIVIST:**
John Mathenge
- **HIV+ ACTIVIST:**
Andrew Hunter
- **GOLDEN YEARS AWARD:**
Alejandra Gil
- **SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENT
AWARD:** Gabriela Leite
- **MOST INSPIRING PROJECT:**
USHA Cooperative Bank
run by and for sex workers
- **MOST AMAZING
RESOURCE 2011/12:**
Hit and Run, Empower
Foundation accepted
by Wei
- **NSWP SPECIAL AWARD
FOR BRAVERY IN
ACTIVISM:** Ye Haiyan,
for the first sex worker
rights protest in China
- **MOST SUCCESSFUL SEX
WORKER VIDEO ACTIVIST:**
Carol Leigh (BAYSWAN)



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT

On the night Laxmi was promoted to become the NSWP Bad Girl Ambassador, charged with the mission to bring sex workers around the globe to join in the fight against rescue and saving operations carried out by fundamentalist feminists and right-wing Christian groups, sex workers want rights not rescue!



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT



Cultural Programme Highlights

STARWHORES GO INTERGALACTIC

For the last three International AIDS Conferences, sex workers from around the globe have produced a collaborative cross-cultural, inter-disciplinary performance. A live satellite link up brought artists from Washington, D.C. and Kolkata together, hosted by Laxmi in Kolkata and Mariko Passion in Washington D.C. 'StarWhores' highlighted the transnational aspects of sex work and our right to freedom of movement and migration. Sex workers and audience members at both sites could interact in parts of the performance.



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT

Kolkata to DG transmission of StarWhores Go Intergalactic at the International AIDS Conference 2012



“This is for the Korean sex workers that dowsed themselves with gasoline, and were willing to die to save their brothel...this is for the Bolivian sex workers that sewed their lips shut and starved themselves to save their jobs... this is for you...and this is for them”

Mariko Passion



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT

Follow the conversation on Twitter:



Check out the
StarWhores
Performance Photo
Gallery by PJ Star

XIX INTERNATIONAL



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT

The Seven Freedoms

SEX WORKER FREEDOM FESTIVAL

Manifesto

Kolkata, India, July 21–27 2012

WE, FEMALE, MALE AND TRANS SEX WORKERS

across the globe have united in Kolkata for the Sex Worker Freedom Festival. This gathering represents a protest against the violence of stigma and discrimination of United States policies and practices. Due to travel restrictions and discriminatory practices against sex workers and other most at risk communities, we have gathered in Kolkata as a safe alternative to Washington, during the International AIDS Conference. The Freedom Festival is our way of fighting this exclusion. The fight against HIV and AIDS requires the active and meaningful engagement of sex workers. Our festival focuses on the freedoms that would allow us to create a global platform for sex workers' rights and meaningfully participate in the fight to end AIDS. Sex workers can help end AIDS!

SEX WORKERS UNITE IN OUR DEMANDS THE FOLLOWING FREEDOMS:

FREEDOM to associate and unionise

Every sex worker should have the freedom to self-determine to improve our social, cultural and economic situation. Every sex worker should have the freedom to join or form trade unions, collectives and coalitions that are sex worker-led. Sex workers should be able to self-organise without restriction.

“It is essential that sex workers be able to self-organise in order to stop the HIV epidemic and still the US Government prohibits funds being given to sex worker-led organisations, the most effective HIV prevention strategy, through the anti-prostitution pledge included in all USAID contracts.”

Ruth Morgan
Thomas (NSWP)

Read more about the PEPFAR “Anti-prostitution pledge in US Aids funding ‘damaging’ HIV response”.

“The government should work with us. They should not be our enemies. We should be able to organize and mobilize. We are still citizens of our country.”

Daisy Namakula
(Uganda)



Phelister Abdalla
(KESWA, Kenya)

FREEDOM to be protected by the law

Every sex worker should have the freedom of equal protection under the law, which includes working without restrictions in the form of criminal laws and penalties.

Every sex worker should have the freedom to access non-discriminatory formal complaints procedures, including being taken seriously by police and the courts when reporting or testifying about crimes against them and having access to meaningful remedies for justice.

“Ideally speaking we should seek the protection of the law like all other citizens but instead we are scared of seeking protection given the attitude of the police towards us”

Ms. Marianne Jonker
(Netherlands)

“Sex Work is illegal in my country. It is quite common for the police to arbitrarily imprison sex workers if they are found with condoms.”

Said Rada (Serbia)

“If you ask any sex worker present here that who is the one person who creates most of the troubles, the answer would be the police man.”

Kashi Ka
Maharashtra (India)



Irina Maslova (Silver
Rose, Russian Federation)

FREEDOM from abuse and violence

Every sex worker should have the freedom to work without violence and to not have our work seen as inherently violent.

Every sex worker should be free from abuse and violence, including slavery, servitude-like practices, and forced or bonded labour, and have the freedom to access justice through safe systems with full recourse to the law. Every sex worker should be free from raids, rescue and compulsory or coercive rehabilitation.

“The police let strangers hit me. Once I rented a house in Shangia. The landlord did not let me sign the contract because I was transgender.”

Sex Worker (China)

“Police have arrested me, clients have hit me when I ask them to wear a condom. Sex workers have no freedom to protest the abuses they face, to move and work freely.”

Sex Worker (India)

Follow the conversation on Twitter:



Point of View @povmumbai

More crazy stats: Out of the 76000+ violent episodes on #sexworkers in Kolkata study, 23000+ episodes by cops. Pathetic. #hivrights #SWFF
Expand

26 Jul



PHOTO: AINSW

FREEDOM from stigma and discrimination

Every sex worker should be free from institutional and societal stigma, as well as discrimination and exclusion based on association with sex work, including sex worker's clients, partners, families, friends, and third parties.

Every sex worker should have the freedom to create and promote social programmes that enhance the dignity and respect of sex workers.



PHOTO: MARC DE CLERQ

“Every day and in every milieu, we have to battle against stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV/ AIDS and sex workers. The right to be free from it must be safeguarded by a dedicated law”

Akram Pasha
Mysore (India)

“a major obstacle to reducing HIV is the fact that sex workers and people who use drugs are systematically discriminated against and criminalised... and there is NO evidence to suggest that such laws reduce demand for sex or (reduce) the number of sex workers.”

Michel Sidibé, UNAIDS Executive Director

Follow the conversation on Twitter:



Zoe Scrogings @zoescrogings

Anna at #SWFF pic.twitter.com/3p5b6Tj4

Expand Reply Delete Favorite More

22 Jul

“One government agency exhorts us to practice safe sex and use condoms in every single sexual encounter and another agency confiscates condoms on the ground that we are indulging in immoral practice...it is not surprising that across Africa, the infection rate among sex workers is as high as 14 to 17%”

John Mathenge (Kenya)

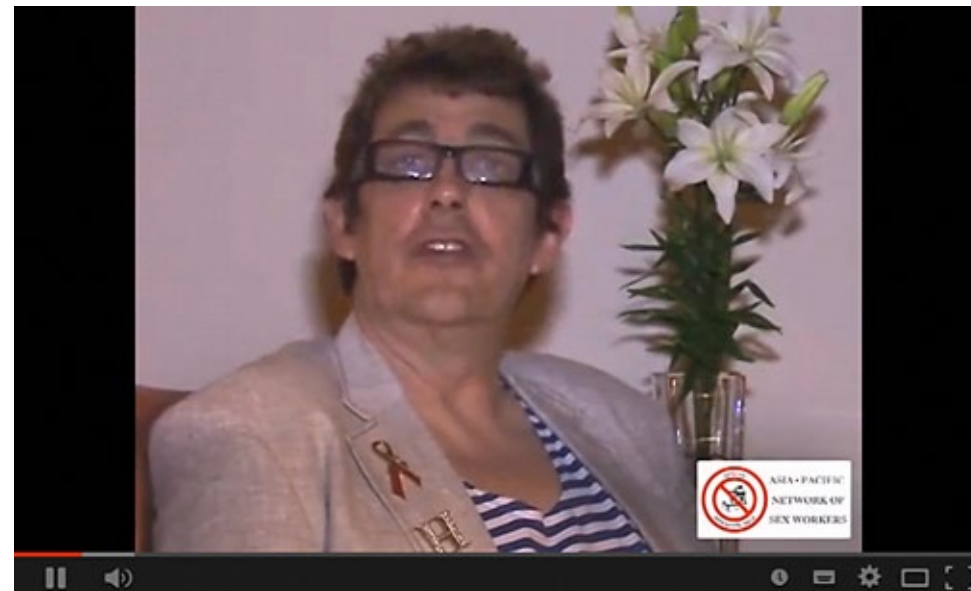


SEX WORKERS THE VOICE TO BE HEARD

John



Julian



Laxmi



FREEDOM to access quality health services

Every sex worker should have the freedom to access non-discriminatory, affordable, culturally-specific, universal quality health services based on a rights-based informed consent model across the full spectrum of HIV prevention, treatment, care and support, and other relevant health services including access to optimum treatment standards.

Every sex worker should be free from coercive health practices, including mandatory or forced STI and HIV testing and treatment, mandatory registration, forced sterilisation and/or termination of pregnancies, and compulsory drug treatment. Condoms are a public health necessity and should never be used as evidence to arrest and/or prosecute sex workers.

“When we talk about health, if we don’t discuss the issue of legalities, we are going to fail.”

Antonio Gerbase, WHO

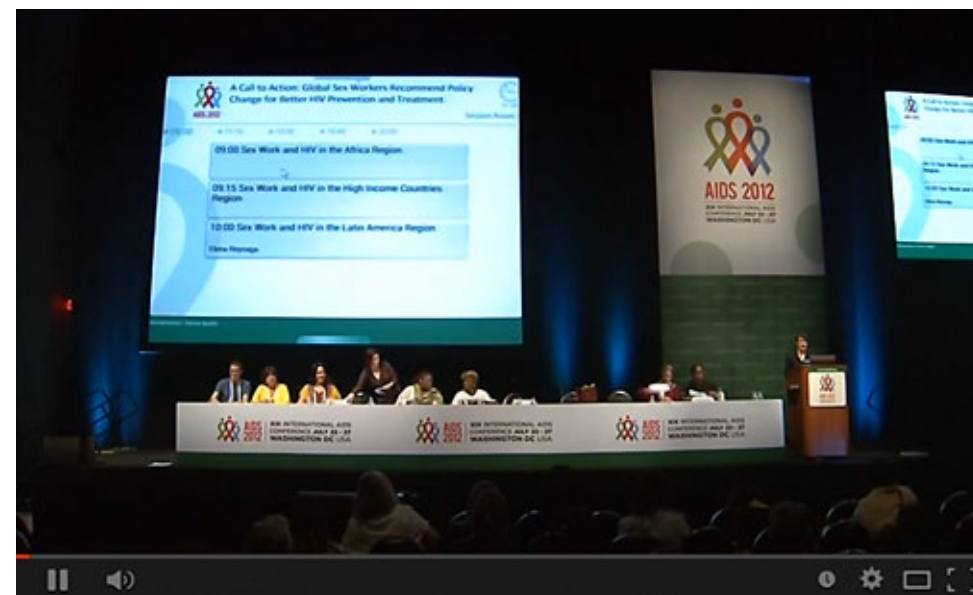


PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT

“There are few sex worker friendly clinics. When TOP started, there was no comprehensive sexual health intervention in Myanmar for sex workers. However through our work we have been able to increase the linkages by providing a comprehensive sexual and reproductive health package that also includes HIV services.”

Kay Thi Win, Director of the Targeted Outreach Programme (TOP) initiative in Myanmar and Chairperson of APNSW

AIDS 2012: A Call To Action: Global Sex Workers Recommend Policy Change for Better HIV Prevention and Treatment



Follow the conversation on Twitter:



FREEDOM of movement and to migrate

Every sex worker has the freedom to move or migrate without restriction for personal and financial purposes, to claim asylum and return to their country of origin without fear of persecution from authorities and communities.

Every migrant sex worker has the freedom to have our work recognised as valuable labour and to be free from policies that redefine sex workers as victims.

Every migrant sex worker has the freedom to protection of local laws and policies and gain access to services that enhance support and safety.

“If you come from a rich country it will be easy to get a visa. You will be called a delegate, tourist or consultant. If you come from a poor country, it will be difficult to get a visa and you will be called a terrorist or disease spreader.”

Malee Vandresitan, EMPOWER (Thailand)



PHOTO: SEX WORKER OPEN UNIVERSITY

“Sex work is considered a moral sin. We are denied basic rights like health, safety and travelling permits. It is killing us.”

Thierry Schaffauser (France)

Follow the conversation on Twitter:



ResearchProjectKorea @photogroffee
Leonora Angkis Lay, Scarlet Timor Collective, from Timor Leste joins
#SWFF via Skype #TimorLeste pic.twitter.com/9avUGvyA
Hide photo Reply Retweet Favorite More

26 Jul

FREEDOM to work and choose an occupation

Sex work is work and every person should have the freedom to work and free choice of employment. The criminalisation of our clients violates this freedom.

Every sex worker should have the freedom to work within safe, secure and healthy workplaces that include the same rights and legal protections as other forms of work.

In addition to this sex workers should have the freedom to achieve financial security, the freedom to have our work recognised as valuable labour and an opportunity for financial security regardless of cultural context.

Every sex worker should have the freedom to work towards financial security and economic independence without the threat of confiscation of earnings, property and personal possessions.

“I chose this work. It’s like any other job, but still I have no rights because society judges me and prevents me from having recognition.”

Sapna Gayan (India)

“We do not want to be saved. We just want to be treated as equals. Sex work is work.”

Khartini Slamah (Malaysia)

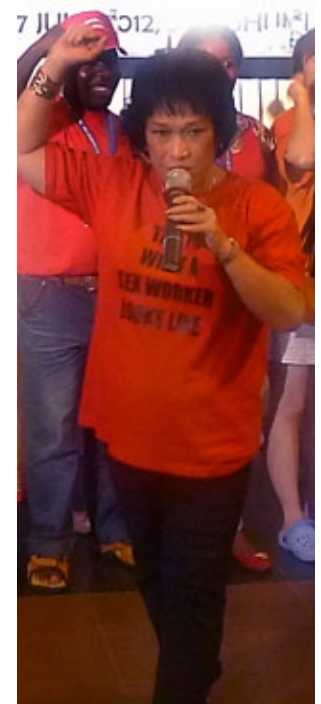


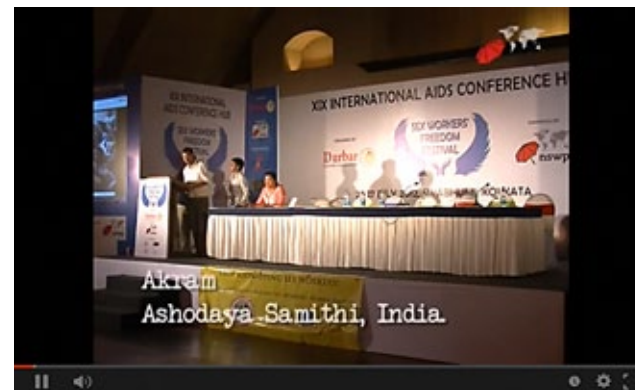
PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT

The Oldest Profession: **IS SEX WORK WORK?**

Joint Session between Kolkata and Washington



Akram, Ashodaya Samithi, India




Kaythi Win, President APNSW



PHOTO: MARC DE CLERQ

[Click HERE](#) to view a video of the entire panel session

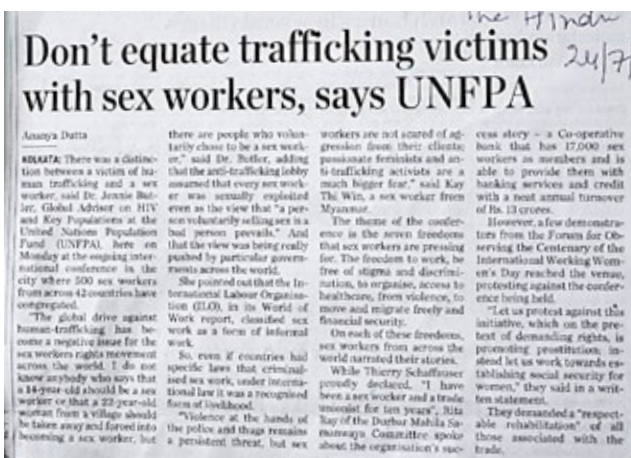
Media Coverage and Info-Activism

A large, diverse crowd of people is gathered, many holding professional cameras and video equipment, suggesting a media event or festival. The people are looking in various directions, some towards the camera. The background shows a wooden slatted wall.

The Sex Worker Freedom Festival gained significant global coverage, our demands and stories were broadcast around the world like never before through mainstream media. The media team was driven by Akhila Sivadas from the Centre for Advocacy and Research, and further amplified by Info-Activism capacity building workshops.

Daily workshops focused on digital activism capacity building, developing a campaign strategy and documentation and sharing information amongst ourselves and our networks. Digital tools gave us greater control over self-representation in peer-to-peer, and global audiences only accessible via the internet. Strategies included specific workshops, reporting on conference plenaries and panels, commenting on activities in Washington and documenting events like the Red Carpet Awards Night, the 'Sex Workers Can End AIDS' rally and StarWhores performance through blogs, video blogs, twitter, facebook, tumblr and instagram.

Follow the conversation on Twitter:



Activism also happened in Washington, where sex worker activists loudly disrupted a special session on the United States Congress and the global AIDS epidemic. Activists rose up from the audience several minutes into the panel, as Senator Bill First praised panelists Senator Chris Coons (Democrat – Delaware), Senator Mike Enzi (Republican – Wyoming), Representative Barbara Lee (Democrat – California), and Senator Marco Rubio (Republican – Florida) for their bipartisan support of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR).

Sex Workers Disrupt Special Session on US Congress And HIV



Revenge of The Whores



Follow the conversation on Twitter:



Zoe Scrogings @zoescrogings
#SWFF info activism workshop pic.twitter.com/17SVLUCD
Hide photo Reply Delete Favorite More

25 Jul



यौनकर्मियों के अधिकार आंदोलन भारतीय टांडे आन्दोलन राशियाओ

यौनकर्मियों के अधिकार आंदोलन भारतीय टांडे आन्दोलन राशियाओ... यौनकर्मियों के अधिकार आंदोलन भारतीय टांडे आन्दोलन राशियाओ... यौनकर्मियों के अधिकार आंदोलन भारतीय टांडे आन्दोलन राशियाओ...



Making themselves heard

महानगर में शुरू हुआ यौनकर्मियों का अंतरराष्ट्रीय सम्मेलन



यौनकर्मियों के अधिकार आंदोलन भारतीय टांडे आन्दोलन राशियाओ... यौनकर्मियों के अधिकार आंदोलन भारतीय टांडे आन्दोलन राशियाओ...

सात दिवसीय सम्मेलन में 42 देशों से 900 प्रतिनिधि शामिल

यौनकर्मियों के अधिकार आंदोलन भारतीय टांडे आन्दोलन राशियाओ... यौनकर्मियों के अधिकार आंदोलन भारतीय टांडे आन्दोलन राशियाओ...



apnsw @apnsw
"dalebkk: Photo: Conference at Kolkata Press Club. #SWFF
tmblr.co/Zj0ptbPmJA3"
Retweeted by Durbar
Expand Reply Retweet Favorite More

19 Jul



KMacDispatch @KMacDispatch
Sex worker activists disrupt special session on US Congress and HIV. youtube.com/watch?v=1t0E94... #swff
View media

26 Jul



यौनकर्मियों के सम्मेलन पर मचा बवाल



यौनकर्मियों के अधिकार आंदोलन भारतीय टांडे आन्दोलन राशियाओ... यौनकर्मियों के अधिकार आंदोलन भारतीय टांडे आन्दोलन राशियाओ...



Sex workers call for an end to US 'anti-prostitution pledge'

Sex workers call for an end to US 'anti-prostitution pledge'... Sex workers call for an end to US 'anti-prostitution pledge'...



SEX WORKERS CAN END AIDS RALLY IN PICTURES

More than 5000 sex workers, and children of sex workers from across 43 countries participated in the 'Sex Workers Can End AIDS' rally which started from Sonagachi, Kolkata's vibrant red-light district, home to the world's largest group of organised sex workers, as a day of action for economic and social justice to end AIDS.



PHOTO: SEX WORKER OPEN UNIVERSITY



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT



PHOTO: MARC DE CLERCQ



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT



PHOTO: SEX WORKER OPEN UNIVERSITY



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT



PHOTO: MARC DE CLERCQ



PHOTO: MARC DE CLERQ



PHOTO: MARC DE CLERQ



PHOTO: SWOU



PHOTO: SWOU



PHOTO: MARC DE CLERQ



PHOTO: MARC DE CLERQ



PHOTO: MARC DE CLERQ



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT



PHOTO: MARC DE CLERQ



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT



PHOTO: SWOU



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT



PHOTO: MARC DE CLERQ



PHOTO: MARC DE CLERQ



PHOTO: MARC DE CLERQ



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT

Media

[Sex workers gather in Kolkata for alternative Aids summit – The Guardian](#)

[Silenced by U.S., Sex Workers Speak from Kolkata – OccuWorld – Global Occupy News](#)

[Sex workers demand respect for their fundamental rights in a parallel summit to the AIDS 2012 – UNAIDS](#)

[Sex workers fight for rights at Kolkata conclave – Samachar](#)

[The Word on Women – PHOTOBLOG – Sex workers rally in India after U.S. travel ban](#)

[International AIDS Conference 2012: Sex Workers Unite In India After Getting Banned From D.C. Conference – Huffington Post](#)

[U.S. ban unites global sex workers at Indian festival – Reuters](#)

[Anti-prostitution pledge in US Aids funding ‘damaging’ HIV response – The Guardian](#)

[Fight against HIV empowering sex workers in India, says UN Aids envoy – The Guardian](#)

Follow the conversation on Twitter:



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT

[Sex Workers Banned From AIDS Conference – IOL News](#)

[Where Were The Sex Workers At The International AIDs Conference? – The Gloss](#)

[Banned sex workers find sympathy from AIDS meeting organizers – Reuters](#)

[International AIDS Conference 2012: Red umbrellas mark sex workers’ rallies in Kolkata and Washington – Health India](#)

[Silenced by U.S., Sex Workers Speak from Kolkata – Inter Press Services](#)

In Pictures

[Sex workers march for rights and Aids awareness in Kolkata – in pictures – The Guardian](#)

[PJ Star Photo Gallery](#)

Blogs

[Human Rights For HIV/AID Now More Than Ever – Kolkata Blogs](#)

[Silence = Death](#)

[We Cant Turn The Tide On HIV Without The Participation of Sex Workers](#)



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT



PHOTO: DALE KONGMONT

“Before the SWFF people thought ‘She speaks about sex work because she’s a whore’. After the SWFF they think: ‘She speaks about sex work because she’s an expert’. I was invited to make a document which will be part of a series named ‘Guidelines for debate’ about sex work. The aim of the series is to influence the formulation, implementation and evaluation of programs and policies through guidelines that foster the debate of ideas from a progressive approach.”

Minerva Valenzuela
(Mexico)

The Legacy

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Many sex workers felt that they walked away from the Sex Worker Freedom Festival stronger as a movement, with more skills, more information and more visibility. An NSWP staff member is now co-chair of a regional IAC 2014 Community Programme Committee and the IAC organisers are now consulting sex workers more regularly.

The cross-cultural and information exchange between different regions that have previously had limited access to each other, such as Indian and Latin American networks, has strengthened local efforts post the Sex Worker Freedom Festival.



The Sex Worker Freedom Festival was the direct catalyst in the launch of NSWHP+ and its new website <http://www.nswp.org/nswp-plus> which was launched on June 2nd for International Sex Worker Day.

The NSWHP+ website is now up and running and exists to collate and publish news and resources of particular relevance to sex workers living with HIV and others with an interest in the involvement of positive sex workers in the global HIV response. A global advisory group of positive sex workers has also been established to inform the NSWHP+ advocacy agenda. Sex workers living with HIV must be at the forefront of policy and debate around HIV and sex work and NSWHP+ aims to share these voices and experiences into national, regional and international advocacy forums.

In a victory for sex worker rights across the world, the United States Supreme Court on 20th June 2013, struck down as unconstitutional the legal requirement that organisations receiving US assistance for HIV programmes must have an explicit policy opposing ‘prostitution’ as part of PEPFAR, and what we have called the Anti-Prostitution Pledge.

The Supreme Court acknowledged that this provision in the United States Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria Act of 2003 (Leadership Act) forced organisations to “pledge allegiance to the Government’s policy of eradicating prostitution” thereby violating the constitutionally guaranteed right to free speech. This landmark decision thus frees US-based organisations to use US funding for essential HIV prevention and care without being bound to an antiquated and unjust position on sex work.

“Life-saving work that all experts see as crucial to HIV prevention and care has been blocked by the moral judgments behind this law, and it is high time that the stranglehold of this scandalous policy is broken”

Meena Seshu,
SANGRAM

Read More About US Supreme Court ruling of the Anti-Prostitution Pledge

- [US Supreme Court Strikes Down Anti-Prostitution Pledge: Vindication for VAMP/ SANGRAM](#)
- <http://www.nswp.org/news-story/implications-the-us-supreme-court-ruling-the-pepfar-anti-prostitution-loyalty-oath>
- [Supreme Court Strikes Down Anti-Prostitution Pledge – The Nation](#)



**‘The Honey Bringer’ – Sex Worker Open University:
Stories from the Sex Worker Freedom Festival**

“SWFF was a life changing experience for me and my colleagues at Sex Worker Open University, UK. In many countries, sex workers face huge stigmatisation that leads to isolation and self-stigma. There are many talks and debates about harm reduction and involving key populations in the fight against AIDS but to be really efficient one of the first steps is to address the core issue of self-stigma. When you are a sex worker, society tells you that you are not worth living, that you are at best useless and at worst a threat or to be “abolished”. Why would you want to protect yourself when society itself does not value your life? Events such as SWFF that gathered thousands of sex workers remind us that as a community we are strong, passionate, knowledgeable and that our lives and those of our friends and communities are worth fighting for and protecting.”

Luca, Sex Worker Open University (UK)

“Coming to Kolkata was so exciting to me because it was my first time to talk in an international gathering. I got a chance of meeting with sex workers from different parts of the world and we shared our experiences which were both positive and negative. This gave me courage and hope that one time sex workers will be free because a lot of strong sex workers have come out to address their challenges. I participated in the march along the streets in Kolkata and the police were escorting us. It was very peaceful. In my country sex workers cannot march along the streets. This also gave me hope because sex work is not legalized in Kolkata but there’s some freedom, so I hope that if we work hard in Uganda we might also achieve some freedom even when our work is not legalized. I left Kolkata with a lot of positive energy coming to improve the way we have been doing our work in Uganda given the experience I got from the sex worker organizing in India.”

Daisy, Director WONETHA (Uganda)

“I feel something from the core of my heart at this festival...from this conference, the hope is that people will be able to know about us. Barriers will break”

Madhu,
transgendered hijra,
West Bengal, (India)



nswp
Global Network of Sex Work Projects
Promoting Health and Human Rights

The Matrix
62 Newhaven Road
Edinburgh
Scotland, UK
EH6 5QB
+44 131 553 2555
secretariat@nswp.org
www.nswp.org

Follow NSWP:

